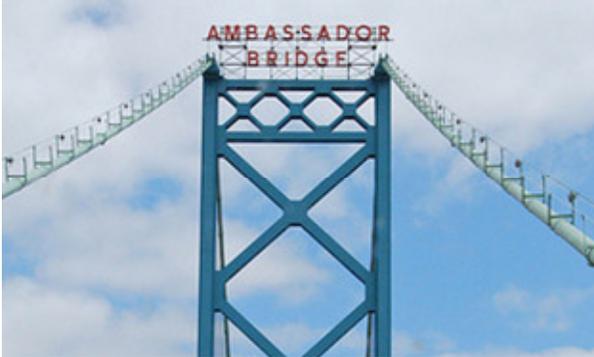


Opposition to proposed entry fee to USA at land border crossings



The Ambassador Bridge

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By [Jonathon Liedtke](#)

Local politicians and business leaders are up in arms over an entry levy proposed by the United States Department of Homeland Security that would see travelers entering the United States via a land border crossing charged an entry fee.

A fee is already levied on those entering the country via rail or airplane, however the price is included in the cost of a ticket.

"Today, the government finally responded [and] they finally said that they would be opposing [the proposal], but I haven't seen very strong moves yet through diplomatic channels," said MP Brian Masse (Windsor-West) who opposes the proposed entry fee.

Masse believes that the impact of the proposal on the economy would be significant and that it would represent a major blow to the economy.

"I'm writing a letter to the Minister expressing our objection to it [and] we'll be writing the Ambassador as well," said Masse. "We're outreaching to those in the United States who are opposed to this too ... we're working on this from a bi-national and an all-party way to fight back against this."

Also opposed to the proposal is Windsor-Essex Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Matt Marchand.

"This is something that the Windsor Essex Chamber and its chamber network colleagues [are] very much opposed to at this stage," said Marchand. "What we're trying to do is to

grow the economy [and] the Ontario, Michigan, Windsor and Detroit economies are closely linked."

Marchand emphasized that the governments of Canada and the United States had recently signed the Beyond the Border initiative which aimed to reduce barriers at the border. He believes that this proposal will add more time, effort, expense and problems at the border.

While Marchand is unsure of the motivation of those who came up with the proposal at Homeland Security, he explained that such a levy was proposed in 1996 under Section 110 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act and that proposal was eventually shelved.

"Those in the positions of authority back in 1996 and 1997 recognized this tax was counterproductive [and] that it would actually reduce revenues, economic growth and productivity," said Marchand.

Marchand and his chamber colleagues plan to speak with appropriate officials in the United States to explain that this is a "bad" idea that was unsuccessfully tried before.

"We're mobilizing Chambers in Ontario and they've been in contact with Congressmen [and] US chambers," said Marchand. "Essentially, we have to rebuild the coalition from the mid 1990s to help defeat this border tax."

"Our trade relationship with the United States is about \$1.6-billion a day and all of that depends on the flowing border," said Marchand. "We're going to be working very hard and ultimately we think that we'll be successful, but we have a lot of work to do."